

Revisiting Reconsidering "Jewish-Christian Relations": Some Thoughts on Theory, History, and Antiquity

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Ten years ago, I attempted to untangle the Gordian knot of "Jewish-Christian relations" in antiquity.¹ The problem was, in a very practical sense, one of sources: we have loads of Christian writings about Jews but very few Jewish writings by contrast. What's more, the Christian sources were almost uniformly hostile, depicting Jews as sinister, maleficent, and at times even brutal in their opposition to Christianity. Christian sources claimed constant, and vituperative, contact between Jews and Christians from the time of Jesus onward. These Christian sources were also, obviously, rhetorical and overdetermined in their efforts to vilify Jews. Yet, from the Jewish side, relative quiet.

Earlier generations of scholars emphasized the rhetorical nature of these texts: the Jews encountered there were mere ciphers, shadows that Christians used to defend themselves to pagan society. The violent excesses and horrors of the second World War made Christian scholars leery of too rapidly erasing the vitality and agency of Jews in antiquity, so these texts were taken more seriously as historical records of conflict. The phantom Jews of earlier scholarship were given flesh and life. Of course, taking seriously the conflict narratives of Christian texts also meant taking seriously Christian accounts of Jewish villainy: Jews calling for the blood of Christians martyrs, stoning Christian saints, throwing open the gates of Jerusalem to Persian invaders and buying up Christian slaves to kill.

By the time I was writing my dissertation in the late 1990s on Christian writings about Jews from the late ancient holy land, possibilities of historical recovery had become

hopelessly entangled with issues of historiographic ethics. To recover "real" Jewish-Christian relations from our Christian sources was to endorse (in some measure) the appalling portrayal of Jews in Christian texts. To reject these portrayals as mere "rhetoric" invented out of whole cloth was (possibly) to admit that historical Jewish-Christian relations (and possibly historical Jews, as well) were lost to us. Jews either vanish from Christian history or remain fixed there with blood on their hands and murder in their hearts.

The choice between rhetoric and reality seemed to me, more than a decade ago, both historically and ethically untenable, a false choice that viewed our ancient sources in too flat a manner, as either empty fantasies or reliable sources. My response was to approach the question from a different theoretical perspective, one that would allow me to appreciate my sources as both historically valuable and rhetorically unreliable. In surveying centuries of Christian texts about Jews I approached them from the vantage point of postcolonial studies.

As I defined this perspective in 2003, "postcolonial criticism is a distinct set of reading practices that seeks to uncover the cultural processes of domination and appropriation that are intimately interwoven with the politics of empire."² Following theorists such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, I read Christian texts of empire against their grain, as rhetorical artifacts that could nonetheless powerfully shape reality and engender processes of cultural domination and resistance. I was, self-consciously, importing a strictly modern form of cultural, political, and literary analysis—one formed in the nexus of modern ideas about race, capital, and gender—into the ancient

world, against the wishes of some of its most prominent theorists.³ Nonetheless, devising a theoretical approach made sense to me, and foregrounding that theory also made sense.

Of course (as I tell my students) when something "makes sense" we must step back and question it. Why should theory become so prominent in my first book (and I think some would say even more so in my second book)? Why should I turn to "critical theory" (of which postcolonial criticism is but one species) for historical answers, and why should I (as it seemed to some readers) make such a big deal out of it?

What I'd like to do today is revisit my biographical and historiographic circumstances at the turn of the millennia in order to interrogate my own theoretical suppositions and assumptions and (I hope) raise larger questions about the role of theory in ancient history. I take myself as a test case: how did I arrive at a particular kind of theoretical "common sense"? Does theory do what I think it does? And what, exactly, do I think I—and it—are doing?

Biography

I had very little theoretical formation as an undergraduate: although it sounds strange to say it, I don't think I'd read a word of Michel Foucault before beginning graduate school. But studying religion at Duke University, particularly under the august auspices of Elizabeth Clark and Dale Martin in the 1990s, was to arrive in a place dripping with "theory." Clark had recently published her book on the Origenist controversy and Martin had just finished The Corinthian Body: both volumes made explicit the theoretical perspectives and commitments of their authors and both served as models of good scholarship for their students.⁴

The curriculum was not itself particularly "theorized." I took one course on hermeneutics with Martin, a course designed for New Testament students, in which we read lots of continental philosophy of "meaning" along with a smattering of French structuralism and poststructuralism. The Graduate Program in Religion at Duke University didn't require any method and theory class of its graduate students—a policy, I learned, that was a subject of vociferous debate among the faculty in the 1980s and 1990s—although we were able to take such a class if we wanted.⁵ Theory was, however, pervasively extracurricular. We were literally socialized into theory, through reading groups and lectures. Elizabeth Clark presided over two monthly reading groups at which she expected her students' regular attendance: a reading group in late antiquity (which has since been absorbed into Duke's Center for Late Ancient Studies) and a reading group in religion and theory that met along with faculty and students from nearby University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Duke University in the 1990s also drew what strikes me now as an astounding list of guest lecturers (these were the days when Fred Jameson and Stanley Fish still presided over the Departments of Literature and English, and the nearby National Humanities Center then as now always drew remarkable talent): Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Robert Young, Ann McClintock and many more all drifted through and gave talks in packed seminars and classrooms. Spivak was remarkably lucid, but no one asked any questions; Bhabha kept interrupting himself, elongating a forty-five minute talk into something closer to two hours; Robert Young spoke personally and eloquently about Derrida; and Ann McClintock showed fantastic pictures of Victorian advertisements and got into a squabble with certain audience members about Judith Butler.

This theoretical atmosphere in which I found myself operated on certain presuppositions (which I gradually learned to decode and articulate). One was postmodernism: simply put, a rejection (or, at the very least, deep suspicion) of processes of meaning-making that aimed to uncover absolute or universal truths (or, as we put it, "capital-T truth"); another was poststructuralism: simply put, again, a process of decentering that called into question the "naturalness" of categories and linear explanatory models.⁶ From these two perspectives (which often became used interchangeably) we engaged with a wide range of theoretical postures: third-wave feminism, queer theory, Marxism (classical and cultural), sociology of knowledge, psychoanalytic theory, and, naturally, streams of discourse analysis indebted to Foucault.⁷

I should note that, as I recall, the theoretically minded community of late antiquity in central North Carolina saw our engagement with theory as an attempt to broaden the scope of our admittedly arcane fields of study. Theories had spread throughout particular quarters of the humanities and social sciences in order to create analytic bridges between otherwise disconnected quarters of academia. The historian of late ancient Christianity could be in meaningful conversation with students of Italian literature, German art history, Latin American politics, not to mention other vastly disparate realms of the far-flung discipline of religious studies.⁸ Our works could influence each other, so that you might see a theoretically informed work of Chinese medical history used to support an argument about early Christian pneumatology,⁹ or a study of early Christian asceticism brought to bear on Victorian history or Thai Buddhism.¹⁰ "Theory" was a common language we could all speak, a kind of intellectual Esperanto, that could extend the breadth and reach of our work.¹¹

The use of theory also made certain political commitments more explicit and this aspect, too, extended the implications of our work and brought our obscure objects of study into wider conversations. It will not surprise you to learn that these were generally leftist politics, postmodern extensions of the political commitments staked out by identity politics in the previous decades. In many ways, the goals were the same: to decenter the assumptions of a white, male, European project of knowledge creation (although, somewhat ironically, through theoretical language devised by slightly later, often white, often male Europeans).¹² Theory, as I learned to think through it in the 1990s, was an active project with (broadly) political aims. To be clear, the idea was not to inject politics into our historical scholarship; indeed, we assumed politics was always already present, but masked under a cloak of objectivity. Theory laid those politics bare, and encouraged new forms of politics. In this way, the integration of poststructuralist theory into the study of late antiquity posed a double challenge: not only to think differently about our objects of study, but to think differently about how they had been studied in the past.¹³

Then as now, this theoretically inflected research into the past met some resistance. Some of this resistance was theoretical and some was scholarly. On the theoretical side, many of my fellow graduate students (particularly students of theology) resisted the poststructuralist rejection of capital-T Truth and developed sophisticated ways of keeping the decentering methodologies of postmodernism while still advocating for constructive orthodoxies.¹⁴ On the scholarly side, to some the use of theory—particularly French, poststructuralist theory—seemed fanciful, self-indulgent, solipsistic, irrelevant, if not downright inimical to "real" scholarship. The so-called Sokal Hoax, perpetrated by physics professor Alan Sokal on the (Duke-based) journal Social Text, erupted precisely in my first

years of graduate school, bringing home the deep-seated suspicion even on the political Left of the obscurantist and relativist world of "theory."¹⁵ In my dissertation defense, I was gently advised by some of my readers on how to make my study "more historical" (presumably also "less theoretical"). The assumption was, I think, that by forefronting my theoretical goals and perspectives so much I had made my argument weaker, more about theory than about history.

This historiographic resistance to theory was already a fairly broad topic of conversation in early Christian studies during my graduate student days. The Journal of Early Christian Studies, then still helmed by its founding editor Elizabeth Clark and housed at Duke University, embodied this tension. Some members of the board (not least the journal's editor) embraced theoretical approaches and saw the Journal as an opportunity to explore new ways of thinking about the Christian past. Other senior scholars on the board found such theory-driven research distracting and inappropriate, a predilection for rhetorical ornamentation and "jargon" that obscured actual scholarship or—worse—was a poor substitute for it. These scholars were also, undoubtedly, suspicious of what they viewed as the particular leftist politics that seemed inherent in these theoretical studies. The invocation of theory in patristics research became tantamount to choosing sides in a clash of the titans. When I gave my very first conference paper, which attempted (probably somewhat clumsily) to use Foucault's author function to trace shifts in Christian ideas of "virtue," a senior scholar complimented the general argument of my paper but asked whether I "needed" the Foucault part. I bristled at the question: if I wouldn't have had the idea to read these texts in this particular way without having read Foucault, shouldn't I cite

him? Why should citing Foucault be different from citing any other modern author with good ideas?

I have thought more abstractly about that question in the intervening years: did I really "need" the Foucault part? What was I signaling by reading Foucault, using Foucault as a lens to understand early Christian texts? Were my claims merely historical, or also theoretical? Which came first for me: Foucault or the fathers? Was I deliberately infusing politics into my scholarship—either a general leftist politics associated with French theory, or a specific academic politics? I think, in retrospect, the well-meaning dissertation readers and the senior scholar at the conference were asking me to consider the same thing: what do I want my scholarship to be about? What kind of historian was I?

History

In her study of history and theory in 2004, Elizabeth Clark surveyed the philosophical problems of "straight" or untheorized history. Her point was, I think, twofold: first, Clark was making a methodological argument about a shift from the Positivism of the nineteenth century through the optimistic socioanthropological methodology of the twentieth century to the poststructural "linguistic turn" of the twenty-first century; second, she was elucidating a more fundamental throughline connecting these different moments: that is, the moral core of the study of history. Clark summarizes these dual aspects of her argument in her introduction when she writes:

I claim that such histories should acknowledge that, as intellectual constructions, they differ from "the past," vanished and now available only through "traces," and that no historical construction is "politically innocent" but is driven by the problems and questions set by the historian in the present.¹⁶

I want to linger on these two linked observations about history before turning back to my own work (which is, in many ways, intertwined with Clark's).

To be sure, in most of History, Theory, Text Clark is concerned with the first problem: the "linguistic turn" in the production of knowledge that has called into question precisely what we can learn from historical sources. No longer, Clark insists, can historians blithely assume there is some recoverable "past" that can be extracted from surviving documents. (Clark is interested almost uniquely in written texts in this book.) It is a problem of referentiality, she explains: we cannot assume any direct correspondence between the discursively constructed texts of the past and the past "as it happened." Language is not a semi-translucent screen through which we might glimpse reality: it is the only reality available to us, a material concatenation of linguistic units ultimately constructed in the past, but present here and now. Historical texts, therefore, are not strictly speaking "sources" but rather "traces."¹⁷

That word "traces" actually appears more than a dozen times in History, Theory, Text, as well as in other articles Clark wrote during this period.¹⁸ It's an evocative term, derived (for Clark) primarily from Jacques Derrida's notion of a text as constituting "traces" of earlier texts, an intertextual chain that constantly re-presents (but never directly refers to) the past.¹⁹ When Clark speaks of "traces" she wants to destabilize our idea of an unmediated past, waiting to be rearticulated in the pages of our history. The past and history are two different countries. We have only traces, and even those that seem to refer to a recoverable past are really just echoes of other texts made up of even fainter echoes, and so on. What we rebuild out of these traces cannot be "the past," or even an accurate facsimile of it.

Yet at the same time I think the term "traces" allows Clark to hold on to some of the seduction of the real that animated Leopold von Ranke when he penetrated the archives in the nineteenth century and invented professional history.²⁰ The "real" past is a lure, a mirage that tempts us. When we think of our documents as "traces" of that past, don't we imagine that—on some level—even if we can't really reconstruct it—we are glimpsing it vaguely on the horizon, like peaks of a far off mountain range? We will never reach those mountains, never accurately map their contours, but does their dimly recognizable shape nonetheless continue to energize and authorize our work? I don't think that Clark is a crypto-positivist, in the sense that she sees attention to "representation" as opposed to "reference" as a handy workaround, a shortcut through the linguistic turn back to "the past." Nonetheless, there is something that the invocation of the past—even in "traces"—is doing for us.

There is, I think, a kind of subtle and interesting connection back to the historical Positivism that lies at the origins of modern, professional history. Not, as I say, in the idea that we can accurately recover the past, but in the sense that our narratives of the past—our histories—carry with them a unique moral authority. Despite his appropriation by U.S. historians as the steely-eyed progenitor of objective, scientific, positive history, von Ranke's positivism had a broader, moral aspect to it.²¹ For von Ranke, writing history was a moral quest. The task of the historian was to elicit the essence of the past and reconstruct its distinctive values, in order to determine the larger moral fabric of history.²² The past has a larger meaning that is elucidated by the work of the historian. Von Ranke's archival precision stood in the service of a larger good.

The sense of the moral uses of the past in the present similarly energized ancient historians in their "socioanthropological moment," a reformation of "social history" through social scientific methods and models in which Clark herself was quite prominent.²³ The various liberatory goals of scholars in the 1970s and 1980s were deeply tied up in their methodological strategies. Now, too, in a postmodern register, when Clark insists that no historian can claim to be "politically innocent" she speaks to an analogous sense of the moral urgency of historical work. To be sure, Clark's desire to make candid "the problems and questions set by the historian in the present" differs a great deal from von Ranke's certainty that our objective recovery of the past can effect moral change in the present. It also moves us away--epistemologically--from the hopeful social history of Clark's own earlier work.²⁴ Nonetheless, throughout the twists and turns of modern professional history we find an ongoing acknowledgment of the moral force of the past, and the responsibility of the historian in wielding a particular kind of expertise over the past.

Furthermore, that moral force has always relied--albeit in very different ways--on the traces of "the real" that linger from the past. Dominick LaCapra framed it clearly in his 2004 work History In Transit (which Kim Haines-Eitzen brought into conversation with History, Theory, Text in a public response to Clark): "The 'happening' of the past does not exist only in the telling or the (historian's) text. If it did, there would be no referential dimension to historiography. It would be self-referential, formalistic fiction."²⁵ When Clark refers time and again to the tantalizing "traces" of the past upon which professional historians ply their trade, I think she is evoking this unique moral force, the seduction of the "real" in the past that makes the narratives of professional historians more ethically compelling than (say) the writings of historical novelists.

The connection between the allure of the past and the ethical obligations of the historian have animated discussion and argument among professional historians, many of whom would disagree with Clark's assertion that "no historical construction is 'politically innocent.'"²⁶ Some historians argue that our only ethical obligation is to get the past "right" (or as close to "right" as our sources will allow) and any other political considerations would actual hinder that ethical obligation.²⁷ Other historians argue that our ethical obligations are to our historical subjects all of whom are, after all, dead and unable to speak for themselves. Edith Wyschogrod articulates it clearly and compellingly: the ethical obligations of the historian are an extension of every human agent's obligations to "the other."²⁸ LaCapra, who has been writing about history and theory since the 1980s, has in recent years drawn the critical, ethical eye of historians to the problem of trauma, violence, and the lost "experience" of the other.²⁹ All historians seems to agree that invocations of the past—writing history—involve ethical stakes. Bad history refuses to take those ethical stakes seriously. For positivist historians, bad history inflicts harm on the discipline and those who seek knowledge of the past; for poststructuralist historians, bad history inflicts harm on a multitude of "others," alive and dead.

Jewish-Christian Relations, and Beyond

These are the many assumptions—realized and unrealized—that formed my intellectual latticework when I was writing my dissertation, which became my first book: history as a structured, ethical engagement with the past, and theory as the various discourses available to me (as a historian) to facilitate those engagements. I wanted to write good history, and good history makes responsible claims about the past in the

present. Historians addressing the problem of Jewish-Christian relations had attempted to hold the traces of the past and the moral responsibilities of the historian in an unresolved tension. If we took our sources seriously, we wrote an anti-Jewish history (bad history in our post-Holocaust ethical context); if we dismissed our available sources, we were left with no history whatsoever (bad history in our disciplinary context). The result in either case as far as I could see was bad history because it refused to find positive ethical stakes in the traces of the past. I don't mean that we had to redeem ancient Jews and Christians, make them moral; I mean we had to secure a narrative past (that is, a history) that could exert moral force in the present. Reifying historical Christian prejudice or dismissing it as fantasy, as far as I was concerned, did not rise to this task.

But did my solution? I turned to postcolonial criticism precisely because it acknowledges the materiality of the past (to create a moral narrative we need to remember that we are thinking about real people with real experiences) and the real force of language in shaping people's lives. Christian writings about Jews were historical sources insofar as they gave us insight into modes of representation and domination (and, I argued, the possibility of Jewish resistance). The critical mode I chose was distinctly political: postcolonial studies (as you might guess) tends to fall pretty clearly on the side against the forces of empire, in the past and present. In this sense, those Christian writers I read through the lens of colonialism were going to be, in some manner, the "bad guys" of my story.³⁰ I don't think my first book was in any sense anti-Christian; in fact, I think it is possible to read my narrative as cautionary, what happens when religion and empire intertwine (therefore holding out the hope of their disentwining). I was also deeply concerned with the problems of representation: what kinds of worlds were (potentially)

constructed by these early Christian texts, and what kinds of possibilities did they hold out for liberation?

Nonetheless, I realize as I look back that I chose a distinctly oppositional mode of critical analysis in my first book, one which lends itself to "good guys" and "bad guys." The analysis of colonialist rhetoric—besides being materialist, leftist, and attentive to rhetoric without dismissing its experiential force—is also highly charged in its political implications. In a roundtable among scholars of antiquity discussing postcolonial theory that took place around the time my first book came out, another senior scholar pointed out to me (very kindly) that my vision of antiquity, as it emerged through a postcolonial narrative, was rather grim and chilling. Well, I responded, I imagine living as a materially colonized subject in a violent, autocratic empire was rather grim and chilling. Of course, my interlocutor knew this; what I was being asked, I think, was once more: why this approach? Why did I choose to pursue a theorized narrative of the past that emphasized political discord, cultural domination, and dimly imagined resistance? In that time and place in my life, the most appealing and compelling ethical narrative I could weave out of the traces of the past was a narrative of violence, power, and resistance. Those were the "problems and questions" set by this historian in his present. I don't mean simply that I can explain my book biographically, but rather that my sense of responsibility as a student of religion in the late twentieth century was focused on particular problems. Our understanding of Jewish-Christian relations, as I perceived them, needed to be unsettled by a rhetoric of power and resistance; likewise, our understanding of the role of empire in religion required some skeptical revisioning. My use of postcolonial criticism evoked a specific kind of politics, and a specific way of thinking through those politics.

When it came time to write my second book, on the circumcision of Christ, my "problems and questions" were different. The problem I set was no longer one of power and resistance but one of identity and difference. I identified another historiographic "problem" of rhetoric: how do we square the insistent discourse of Christian unity with the pervasive existence of Christian diversity in the first centuries of the religion? I pushed deeper into the psychoanalytic roots of postcolonial criticism, retrieving theories of personhood and community that described all boundaries as self-undermining fantasies. If the power structures of empire in my first book always necessarily invoked the resistance of the powerless, now communal identity writ large resisted its own constitution. Pervasive Christian rhetoric of boundaries and difference really dissolved boundaries and concealed a longing for the other. As in my first book, I was very straightforward and clear about my use of theory and why I thought it persuasively addressed the historical problem of Christian difference in a new way. Lacan, Kristeva, and friends inhabited the main body of my text, they did not just linger furtively in the endnotes. (And, as with my first book, some immediate criticism from other scholars has had to do with the distracting and "unnecessary" intrusion of theory into a historical analysis). Furthermore, I tied these theoretical insights to a particular argument about the inner constitution of the Roman Empire, and in this I claimed my argument was as historical as it was theoretical. By historical I don't—I can't—mean that I have correctly decoded the capital-T truth about the Roman Empire and early Christianity. I mean that my use of the traces of the past form a coherent and compelling ethical argument in our present moment.

But what do I mean by that? How do I (or how does another) judge the coherence of my narrative of the past, and to whom—and for whom—is my ethical argument compelling?

Here I think we get to some of the real problems (or, from another angle, the possibilities) inherent in this particular theorized posture toward the writing of history. First, by what measures do we evaluate postmodern history? How do I know my narrative is coherent? There are, to be sure, certain rules of conduct in the writing of history, certain modes of discourse that are allowable and not allowable: acceptable modes of handling, reproducing, and connecting those "traces" of the past, linked to specific kinds of professional expertise.³¹ Texts must be placed in appropriate contexts;³² appropriate linguistic expertise of primary sources must be demonstrated; certain agreed upon facts must be respected (dates, names, places, and so forth). Certain scholarly conventions—such as the footnote, which I use in abundance—give a sense of the reliability of my particular historical narrative (and locate me implicitly within particular scholarly networks).³³ If I follow these rules and conventions (what my dissertation readers probably meant by making my work "more historical") is my narrative thereby more historically coherent?

Perhaps, as intellectual historian Franklin Ankersmit has been arguing for some time now, the criteria by which we judge the relationship between history and the past are primarily aesthetic (and therefore subjective and contingent), more analogous to artistic representation than to scientific proof.³⁴ We are not interpreting the traces of the past, but rather depicting them. The criterion for evaluation is not, therefore, the accuracy of the interpretation but the resonance of my depiction. Whether or not readers find my depiction coherent might be judged by how well—how "realistically," perhaps—I have rendered my subject.³⁵ If such historiographic judgments are conventional (or, to be more blunt, subjective) then it becomes clear (to me, at least) that we cannot disentangle questions of historical coherence from ethical value. Subjective judgment entails moral judgment.

History seems right—or accurate, or faithful to the traces of the past—when it also does notable and effective work in the present. Good history is good history.

Untangling the relationship between historicity and ethics brings us back to the ghost of the real that underlies our fascination with the past: those elusive traces which escape our grasp but nonetheless give moral force to our historical narratives. For my history to be compelling and coherent, it must evoke that past in a way that seems real enough, even as I disavow any attempt to fully resurrect and re-present "the real." "The past" must still, in some persuasive and demonstrable way, lie behind my narrative and the degree to which I make clear that dependence becomes one measure by which other historians may gauge my "coherence."

By giving up on the recovery of the past, but still drawing on its moral force to advance ethically compelling narratives, I may seem to some historians to be trying to have my cake and eat it, too. Here, at last, is where I think the presence of theory becomes critically significant in my history writing. It is not enough for me to simply know that when I write history I am not making present the past, but rather marshaling traces of "the past" to craft significant narratives in the present. I must also explain to my readers what questions and concerns motivate my historical writing: what is "the present" from which I am narrating "the past," and how do those present circumstance help determine my mode of historical operation?³⁶ Theory helps me make those claims. If I do not make my stakes clear through my theoretical framework, I am indeed engaging in a kind of sleight-of-hand, veiling contemporary concerns under the cloak of a kind of historiographic "realism." Theory pulls back the veil, without disavowing the fact that this is "real" history (as opposed to historical fiction).

The presence of theory in my historical writing—in addition to (hopefully) making my historical narratives accessible across academic disciplines—therefore also makes explicit how and why I am using traces of the past, and therefore renders both my historical representation and its ethical force open to useful critique and revision. When I use postcolonial "theory" in my first book, I am framing the problem of Jewish-Christian relations as primarily a political problem, a problem of representation, domination, and resistance. Christian sources about Jews from the holy land are brought to bear in this narrative neither as reliable witnesses nor as airless fantasies, but as species of a particular kind of materialist speech that brings a particular kind of world to life. That world, as it emerges in my book, challenges us to think in new ways about the appropriation of other space, the monumentalization of religious triumphalism, and the relation between knowledge production and political will. Ten years later, I think these remain pressing questions for us to ponder. The theoretical framework ties my narrative tightly to its moral framework; my argument is at once about how to rearrange our "traces" into a coherent (perhaps, "realistic") narrative and also about the larger significance of that narrative. To engage with my argument and critique it, therefore, I think it's probably not sufficient to say that my use of theory renders my use of historical sources problematic. Theory links my historical work to my ethical hopes. Historiographic coherence and ethical viability can thus be judged together, allowing my readers to judge fairly whether or not the result is, in the end, good history.

¹ My thoughts on this subject appeared in two places in 2003: first, in an extended essay "The Lion and the Lamb: Reconsidering Jewish-Christian Relations in Antiquity," in The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, ed. Annette Yoshiko Reed and Adam Becker (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 95-118; and as the concluding chapter of Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 200-209. I rehearsed the arguments of these pieces in a broader framework in "Jews and Christians," in The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 169-85.

² Jacobs, "Lion and the Lamb," 106-7; see also Remains of the Jews, 7-10.

³ See my discussion in Remains of the Jews, 10, where I note (briefly) Robert Young's insistence on the modernist context of postcolonial criticism (Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction [London: Blackwell, 2001]), 56).

⁴ Elizabeth A. Clark, The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of a Christian Debate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 1: "To other readers, my rendition of the controversy's issues will carry contemporary resonance: the status of representation; the ways in which the body is inscribed with cultural value; the constitution of the 'self'; how praxis both creates and challenges theory."

⁵ This policy still stands (personal communication from Maria Doerfler, February 19, 2013).

⁶ Both of these perspectives are evident in Elizabeth Clark's definitions of "theory" in History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), x: first, from Rey Chow, "the paradigm shift introduced by post-structuralism, whereby the study of language, literature, and cultural forms becomes irrevocably obliged to attend to the semiotic operations involved in the production of meanings, meanings that can no longer be assumed to be natural" (see Chow, "The Interruption of Referentiality," South Atlantic Quarterly 101 [2002]: 172); second, from Paul Strohm, "any standpoint from which we might challenge a text's self-understanding" (see Strohm, "Introduction," Theory and the Premodern Text [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000], xiv).

⁷ These poststructuralist and postmodernist perspectives had dislodged earlier prominent social scientific modes of analysis at Duke in the 1980s, perhaps most significantly the aspiration to reproduce the "thick description" of Geertzian anthropological writing: see Clark, History, Theory, Text, 145-55.

⁸ Elizabeth Clark affirms this recollection in "Response to Comments on History, Theory, Text," Church History 74 (2005): 831: "At Duke in the late 1980s and early 1990s, colleagues in Literature or French were not interested in antiquity; if professors of early Christianity wished to engage them in conversation, it was necessary to grasp the rudiments of their language."

⁹ So Dale Martin, The Corinthian Body (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 142-45.

¹⁰ Peter Brown's The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), is routinely cited as a theoretically significant text along with Foucault's History of Sexuality and Thomas Laqueur's Making Sex.

¹¹ Dominick LaCapra, History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 249-53, refers somewhat disparagingly to the "import/export" model by which historians took in social scientific methods in order to craft more persuasive and self-reflexive narratives.

¹² Although French structuralism and poststructuralism was deeply marked by feminist criticism as well as the colonial and postcolonial struggles of French North Africa: see Pal Ahluwalia, Out of Africa: Post-Structuralism's Colonial Roots (London: Routledge, 2010)

¹³ Perhaps unsurprisingly my two theoretical mentors eventually, in different ways, ended up turning their historical critical gaze from antiquity to the study of antiquity: see Dale B. Martin, "Paul and the Judaism/Hellenism Dichotomy: A Social History of the Question," in Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001), 29-61 and (more extensively), Elizabeth A. Clark, Founding the Fathers: Early Church History and Protestant Professors in Nineteenth-Century America, Divinations (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

¹⁴ The rising tides of "Radical Orthodoxy" became quite popular among the theoretically sophisticated theology students coming out of Duke in the 1990s.

¹⁵ In 1996, Alan Sokal submitted a deliberately "incoherent" poststructuralist article on quantum gravity accepted to the critical theory journal Social Text, which was accepted ("Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity," Social Text 46/47 [1996]: 217-252); he simultaneously published an account of his hoax in the theory-suspicious neoliberal academic "trade" journal Lingua Franca ("A Physicist Experiments With Cultural Studies," Lingua Franca [May 1996]: 62-64). His purpose, as he explained there, was to unmask the lack of academic rigor masked by poststructuralist jargon. The editors of Lingua Franca subsequently published a collection including Sokal's two original articles and responses: The Sokal Hoax: The Sham That Shook the Academy (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000). (It should be noted that Lingua Franca has since shut down, while Social Text still publishes.) Sokal himself still dines out on his somewhat mean-spirited notoriety: see Alan Sokal, Beyond the Hoax: Science, Philosophy, and Culture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁶ Clark, History, Theory, Text, 7.

¹⁷ As Richard Lim ("Conversion or Adhesion? Historians between the Social Sciences and the Linguistic Turn") points out in his response to Clark's book, published as part of a set in Church History 74 (2005): 820-26, as very few scholars of antiquity professed to be pure

Rankean historians toiling in the archives in quest of truth, her main targets for correction are in fact social historians enthralled "sociocultural" approaches: "Annales, microhistory, Geertzian 'thick description,' and Marxist 'history from below,' all of which presuppose that the historians' task is to uncover and understand a substratum of realia through critical analysis" (821).

¹⁸ Clark, History, Theory, Text, x, 7, 18, 72, 102, 120, 123, 128, 129, 132, 152, 157, 286n13, 297n148; see also Clark, "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the 'Linguistic Turn,'" Church History 67 (1998): 31; Clark, "Holy Women, Holy Words: Early Christian Women, Social History, and the 'Linguistic Turn,'" Journal of Early Christian Studies 6 (1998): 420, 429.

¹⁹ Clark, History, Theory, Text, 152 (for instance). Clark also refers to Hayden White's post-Metahistory incorporation of some poststructuralist (even Derridean) ideas: "Although inaccessible to us, past events, [White] claimed, leave their 'traces' in the form of documents, monuments, and in present social practices" (History, Theory, Text, 102).

²⁰ On von Ranke, see Clark, History, Theory, Text, 9-13; Clark is most interested in the American appropriation of von Ranke's famous quest for the past "wie es eigentlich gewesen" into an "objective" historical science (see pp. 13-17), which (she acknowledges) stripped von Ranke's Positivism of its moral fervor (on which see below).

²¹ Clark, History, Theory, Text, 13; as per usual with Clark, a reader must also consult the voluminous footnotes to these few sentences on pp. 202-3.

²² See the extensive introduction and collection of von Ranke's writings in Leopold von Ranke, The Theory and Practice of History, 2d ed., ed. Georg G. Iggers (London: Routledge, 2011).

²³ For Lim, "Conversion or Adhesion," Clark's turn away from the possibilities of social history forms the center of his critique, as he asks: "Should we read in *HTTHLT* [*History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*] a call for a moratorium on a seemingly fruitful scholarly approach that Prof. Clark's own work has done so much to propagate?" (822).

²⁴ Clark discusses the struggle with her own, earlier social historical work--explicitly prompted by her feminist historical concerns--in "The Lady Vanishes."

²⁵ LaCapra, History in Transit, 29; see Kim Haines-Eitzen, "Reimagining Patristics: Theory's Vital Role in the Study of Premodern Texts," Church History 74 (2005): 816-20.

²⁶ In the same year that Clark's History, Theory, Text was published appeared the collection of essays in The Ethics of History, *Northwestern Topics in Historical Philosophy*, ed. David Carr, Thomas Flynn, and Rudolf Makkreel (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2004). This collection was based on a conference held at Emory University in 1998.

²⁷ So Allan Megill, "Some Aspects of the Ethics of History-Writing: Reflections on Edith Wyschogrod's An Ethics of Remembering," in Carr et al., Ethics of History, 45-75, at (for instance) 49: "Fundamentally, before anything else, the historian needs to be able to vouch for the truth of the history that he or she writes, just as the accountant needs to be able to vouch for the truth of the accounts that he or she presents." Later, Megill notes that: "the historian stands apart from the notion that history ought to be a form of propaganda for 'the good cause'—whatever that cause may be—and instead engages in a pursuit that stands beyond such particular commitments" (55-56).

²⁸ Edith Wyschogrod, "Representation, Narrative, and the Historian's Promise," in Carr et al., Ethics of History, 28-44, drawing on her earlier work in An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology, and the Nameless Others, Religion and Postmodernism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Wyschogrod's emphasis on historical ethics and the "other" (heteros) recalls Michel de Certeau, Heterologies: Discourse on the Other (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).

²⁹ Dominick LaCapra, Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); History and Memory After Auschwitz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Writing History, Writing Trauma (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); History in Transit; History and Its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

³⁰ Compare Clark, Origenist Controversy, 10: "Evagrius Ponticus, Rufinus, and the Pelagians are thus the 'heroes' of my account—not Epiphanius, Jerome, and Augustine."

³¹ These rules are even more complex for (primarily modern) historians working in archives.

³² "Historical context" is itself a contested historiographic concept, however: see Martin Jay, "Historical Explanation and the Event: Reflections on the Limits of Contextualization," New Literary History 42 (2011): 557-71.

³³ See the invaluable Anthony Grafton, The Footnote: A Curious History (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

³⁴ F.R. Ankersmit, Meaning, Truth, and Reference in Historical Representation (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); see his earlier "In Praise of Subjectivity," in Carr et al., Ethics of History, 3-27; Historical Memory, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Aesthetic Politics: Political Philosophy Beyond Fact and Value, Mestizo Spaces/Espaces Métissées (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). In Sublime Historical Experience, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), Ankersmit makes explicit the connection to artistic representation by seeking to connect the pleasure and desire of history with the prelinguistic experience of the sublime found in a work of art.

³⁵ See F.R. Ankersmit, "The Reality Effect In the Writing of History: The Dynamics of Historiographical Topology," in his History and Topology: The Rise and Fall of a Metaphor (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 125-61.

³⁶ Among the "contributions" of theory to history that LaCapra lists in the final paragraph of History in Transit, the first two are: "(1) [theory] renders explicit what might be called background assumptions or preconceptions; (2) [theory] thus opens these assumptions to critical examination that tests and may, in varying degrees, validate or invalidate them" (History in Transit, 270).